

# 3

## Existing Land Use

### Background

West Saint Paul is a five square mile first ring suburb in Dakota County located west of the Mississippi River and directly south of downtown St. Paul. It is bounded by the Lafayette Freeway (Highway 52) on the east, Delaware Avenue on the West, Mendota Road and Southview Boulevard on the south and primarily by Annapolis Street on the north. Within these boundaries is a diverse mix of residential, business, institutional and recreational activity.

As indicated in the map on the following page, the Metropolitan Council has designated the City of West Saint Paul as a “developed community” geographic planning area in the *2030 Regional Development Framework*. According to the document, Council investments in regional systems and incentives for the Developed Communities are to maintain current infrastructure; renew and improve infrastructure, buildings and land to provide for additional growth, particularly at centers along transit corridors; and support developments that integrate land uses.

The attached map (page 22) shows the existing land use pattern in West Saint Paul according to the Dakota County's Land Usage Data. It is divided into nine broad land use categories: Single Family Residential, Townhome Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Parks and Recreation, Public/Semi-Public, Undeveloped, and Water (Townhomes are included under Multi-Family Residential in the table below. Roadways are shown as white on the Map and accounted for in the total acreage).

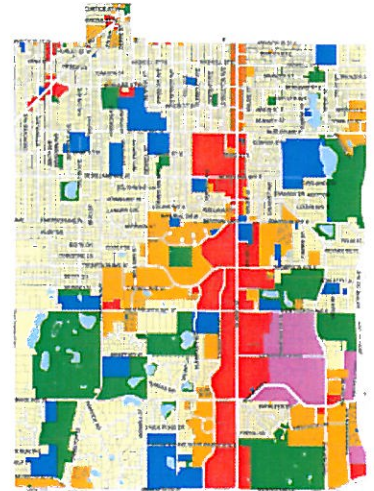
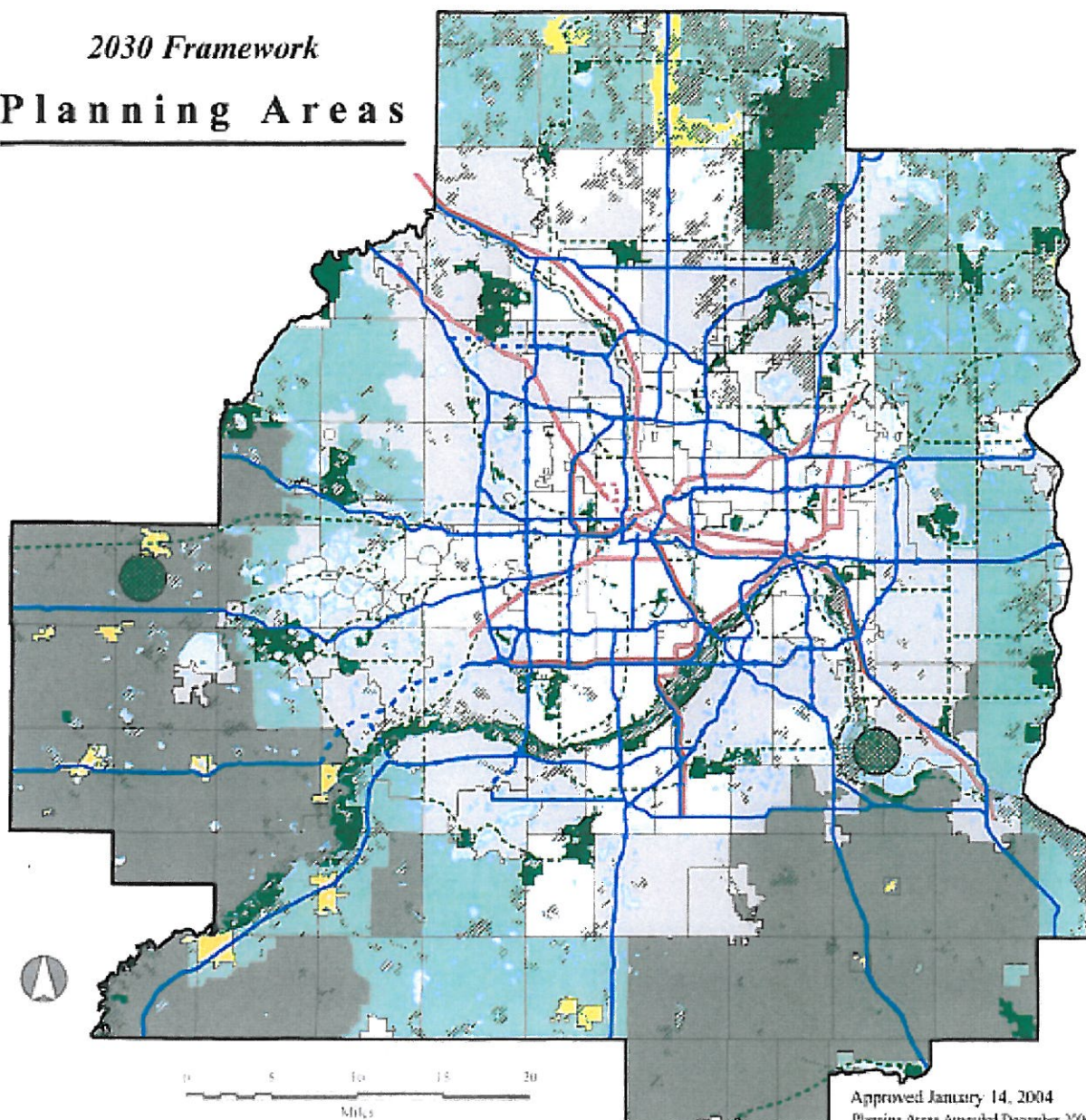


TABLE 15 - EXISTING LAND USE: 2007

Land Use Type	Acres	Percent of Total
Single Family Residential	1227.5	38.3%
Multi-Family Residential	276.0	8.6%
Commercial	284.7	8.9%
Industrial	102.2	3.2%
Parks and Recreation	397.5	12.4%
Public/Semi-Public	215.3	6.7%
Open Water and Wetlands	68.6	2.1%
Undeveloped	32.3	1%
Roadways	604.4	18.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3208.5</b>	<b>100%</b>



# *2030 Framework* **Planning Areas**



Approved January 14, 2004  
 Planning Areas Amended December 2006

NOTE: Please refer to the Comprehensive Plans Composite map or the Regional Systems maps for the most recent information. These maps are available at the Metropolitan Council Data Center (651) 602-1140.

Geographic Planning Areas		Additional Information	
<b>Urban Planning Areas</b>	<b>Rural Planning Areas</b>	Regional Natural Resource Areas (includes Terrestrial and Wetland Areas) SOURCE: Metro DNR in coordination with the Metropolitan Council	Regional Trail
Developed Area	Rural Center	Regional Park	Transit 2025 Corridor
Developing Area	Agricultural	Proposed Regional Park	Principal Arterial
	Diversified Rural		Open Water
	Rural Residential		

The community is quite typical of first ring suburbs, except for the large commercial concentration on Robert Street.

Pertinent observations of the map and tabulation are:

1. 99% of the City is developed for urban use leaving 1 percent currently vacant and potentially available for urban use.
2. Single family residential land (excluding local residential streets) is the largest land use at 38% of the total.
3. Park and Recreation uses and Public/Semi-Public uses combined make up 20% of the City.
4. Commercial land is 9% of the total. This figure is relatively high when compared to other metro communities' average of approximately 5%. Most of the commercial land is located on or adjacent to the Robert Street corridor with a few areas along Dodd Road and other major intersection areas.
5. The percent of land devoted to industrial purposes is below metropolitan averages. Industrial activity is concentrated in the southeast part of the City between Wentworth and Marie Avenue.

## 3.1 Residential

### Description of Existing Residential Land Uses:

**Single Family:** Lots or parcels of five acres or less containing single family detached housing. May include some two-family homes, and open space within or adjacent to a related residential development.

**Townhomes:** Lots or parcels containing multiple dwelling units; including: triplexes, quadhomes, townhomes, and other varieties of attached housing.

**Multi-Family:** Lots or parcels containing multiple dwelling units; including apartments, condominiums, senior housing, and manufactured housing.

Single family residential continues to be the dominant land use in West Saint Paul, comprising approximately 38% of the total land area or 1228 acres. In comparison with other first ring suburbs, however, West Saint Paul has a smaller percentage of land devoted to single family residential use. The average portion of a first ring suburb devoted to single family residential use in the Twin Cities is approximately 50% of the total land.

The single family housing stock in West Saint Paul varies dramatically as one traverses the City. The northern half of the City is comprised primarily of smaller, older detached homes to moderately sized middle bracket homes in the northeast. The central region of the City is home to



a stable middle bracket housing base; while the southwest portion of the city contains newer, upper bracket housing on larger lots.

The City continues to have a large proportion of land devoted to multi-family and attached housing. Presently, about 9% of the land in West Saint Paul is used for multi-family, condominiums or attached townhomes. Multi-family housing may include market rate rental as well as subsidized and senior housing. Townhomes represent attached owner-occupied units. The higher density residential developments in West Saint Paul are concentrated primarily in the central region of the City between Emerson Avenue and Wentworth Avenue and in the southeast quadrant between Marie Avenue and Mendota Road. They are primarily closer to commercial, public services and transportation corridors.

## 3.2 Commercial

### Description of Existing Commercial Land Uses:

**Commercial:** Uses that provide goods and services to the general public. Examples of Commercial uses include: retail sales, services, hotels/motels and all recreational services that are predominantly privately owned and operated for profit.

Despite not having a traditional downtown or a central shopping/business area, West Saint Paul continues to have a high percentage of land devoted to commercial use. Approximately 9% of the total land in the City or 285 acres is used for commercial activity.

Commercial land use in West Saint Paul remains concentrated on and around Robert Street. Approximately 85% of the total commercial land in the City is within two blocks of Robert Street. The remaining commercial activity is located at Smith Ave and Dodd Road as well as a few other key intersections.

Larger anchor stores such as K-Mart, Menards, Wal-Mart, Target, Rainbow, Cub, and Lowe's have helped to draw regional traffic from outside the city limits and have contributed to the development and redevelopment of smaller retail shops and restaurants in and around their sites.

## 3.3 Industrial

### Description of Existing Industrial Land Uses:

**Industrial:** Lots or parcels used primarily for manufacturing and/or processing of products, assembly, warehousing, and similar operations. Industrial land uses may be categorized in two groups; high performance

industrial (light industrial) or medium performance industrial (general industrial).

Industrial activity such as manufacturing, processing, assembly, warehousing and trucking constitute a relatively small percent of the total land in West Saint Paul. Approximately 3% of the total land area or 102 acres is industrial. The amount of industrial land during the last twenty years has remained virtually constant, only minimal change in total acreage has occurred. Since 1970, there has been an addition of only forty-one acres on industrial land use in the City.

The industrial activity in West Saint Paul is concentrated in the southeast corner of the City and along the southern border. The major industrial employers include Tapemark Company, DARTS, Sexton Printing, and RTC Plastics.

### **3.4 Public/Semi-Public**

#### **Description of Existing Public/Semipublic Land Uses:**

**Public/Semipublic:** Primarily religious, governmental (i.e. City Hall, Public Works garage), educational, cemeteries, social or healthcare facilities (excluding clinics)

For purposes of the Land Use Inventory, public uses included all sites and facilities owned by a governmental entity, except those uses designated as parks. Examples include schools, libraries, government buildings and other land that is used for a public purpose such as water towers or reservoirs. Land uses classified as semi-public are facilities that serve large portions of the population and are not operated as commercial businesses. Semi-public facilities may or may not be open to the public. Examples include churches, cemeteries and parochial schools.

In West Saint Paul, public and semi-public facilities are located throughout the city. There are 215 acres of public and semi-public land in the City; 7% of the total land area. The Municipal Center and Northern Dakota County Service Center are the major public facilities in the City. Semi-public facilities in West St. Paul include St. Croix Lutheran High School, Emanuel Lutheran School, St. Joseph School, St. Michael School, the NET Ministries and other smaller charities, non-profits, and institutional uses.

### **3.5 Parks and Recreation**

#### **Description of Existing Parks & Recreation Land Uses:**

**Parks & Recreation:** Primarily public active recreation activities improved with playfields/grounds or exercise equipment, golf courses, zoos, or other similar areas.

Parks and Recreation include “mini-parks” (less than one acre), neighborhood parks, community parks, community playfields (athletic fields, ice arenas, for example) and large regional parks and open space. Approximately 12% or 398 acres of the land in West Saint Paul is devoted to Parks and Recreation. Large parks and open space areas are located on the western and eastern edges of the City (Dodge Nature Center and Thompson Park) as well as in the north central portion of the City (Harmon Park). Smaller neighborhood and community facilities are scattered throughout the City.

Parks and open space for recreation is an essential component of the overall urban fabric. With over 12% of the land used for parks and recreation, West St. Paul is in a position to create an inter-connected parks and open space system by creating linear connections between the major park facilities. For example, over the years, the City has implemented a trail system that links Thompson Park in the Northeast, to Thompson Oaks Golf Course, through Marthaler Park and Garlough Park in the Southwest. There are discussions to extend this trail system through Dodge Nature Center to Highway 110.

## 3.6 Undeveloped

### Description of Existing Undeveloped Land Uses:

**Vacant Lots:** Developable lots that have either have been developed but have been vacated or remain undeveloped.

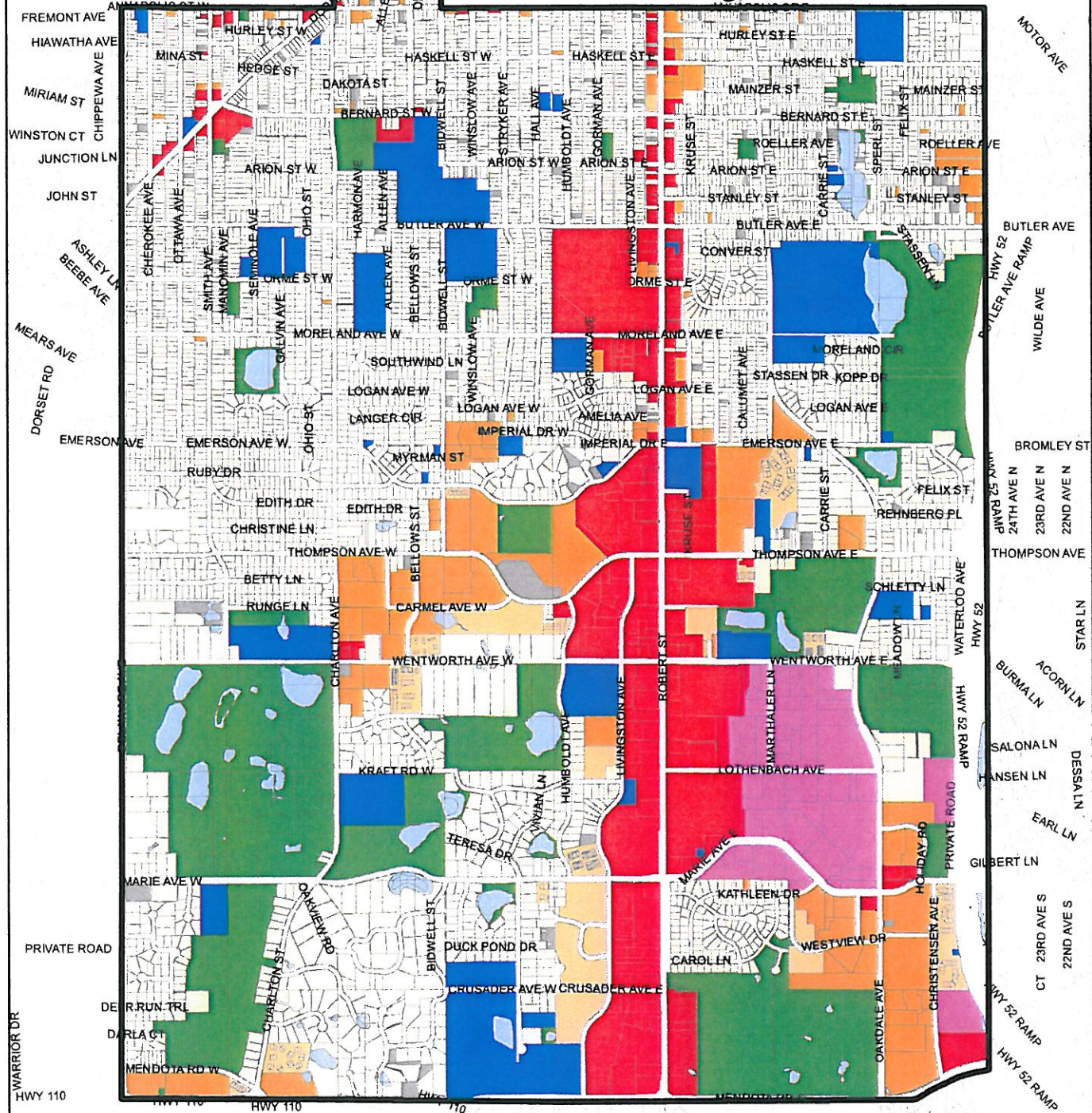
**Water:** Permanently flooded open water, rivers and streams, not including wetlands or periodically flooded areas.

Only a small amount of land in West Saint Paul remains undeveloped, approximately 32 acres or 1% of the total land area. The undeveloped land consists mostly of small individual parcels scattered throughout the City. According to the County database, these parcels may be vacant land and/or vacant buildings. They could represent small potential development/redevelopment opportunities. With the recent development of Wentworth Townhomes, only smaller vacant parcels remain.












# 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update

# West St. Paul Existing Land Use



## LEGEND

- |   |               |   |                                |
|---|---------------|---|--------------------------------|
|  | SINGLE FAMILY |  | INDUSTRIAL                     |
|  | TOWNHOMES     |  | PARKS AND RECREATION           |
|  | MULTI-FAMILY  |  | PUBLIC / SEMIPUBLIC            |
|  | COMMERCIAL    |  | VACANT LOTS (LAND OR BUILDING) |
|   |               |  | WATER                          |

0 0.25 0.5 1  
Miles



**LOUCKS  
ASSOCIATES**

Source: Dakota County Parcels Map



## **3.7 Natural Environment**

Although the City is nearly fully developed, there remains a significant amount of natural features and environmentally sensitive areas within the City. These areas are important to the community for a variety of reasons, aesthetic, scenic and recreational. It is in the City's interest to protect and preserve these natural features as community assets.

### **Woodland/Steep Slopes**

The south central and southwest portion of the City is characterized by rolling to hilly terrain with a variety of significant woodland concentrations. Irregular formations of steep slopes exist throughout the area. Most of the steep hillsides have a woodland cover. Vegetation deters soil erosion on the steep slopes and is valuable for wildlife habitat and visual amenity. Detailed maps of existing woodland and slopes in excess of 18% are available at the City.

### **Water and Wetlands**

The Wetlands map identifies those wetlands in the City of West Saint Paul classified as "Public Waters" and "Wetlands", all of which are over 2.5 acres in size. DNR regulations apply to those wetlands. Additionally, the map shows some wetlands under 2.5 acres which are not regulated by DNR but which the City wants to preserve for amenity and functional purposes. Detailed maps of these wetlands are on file at the City. The principal water bodies are:

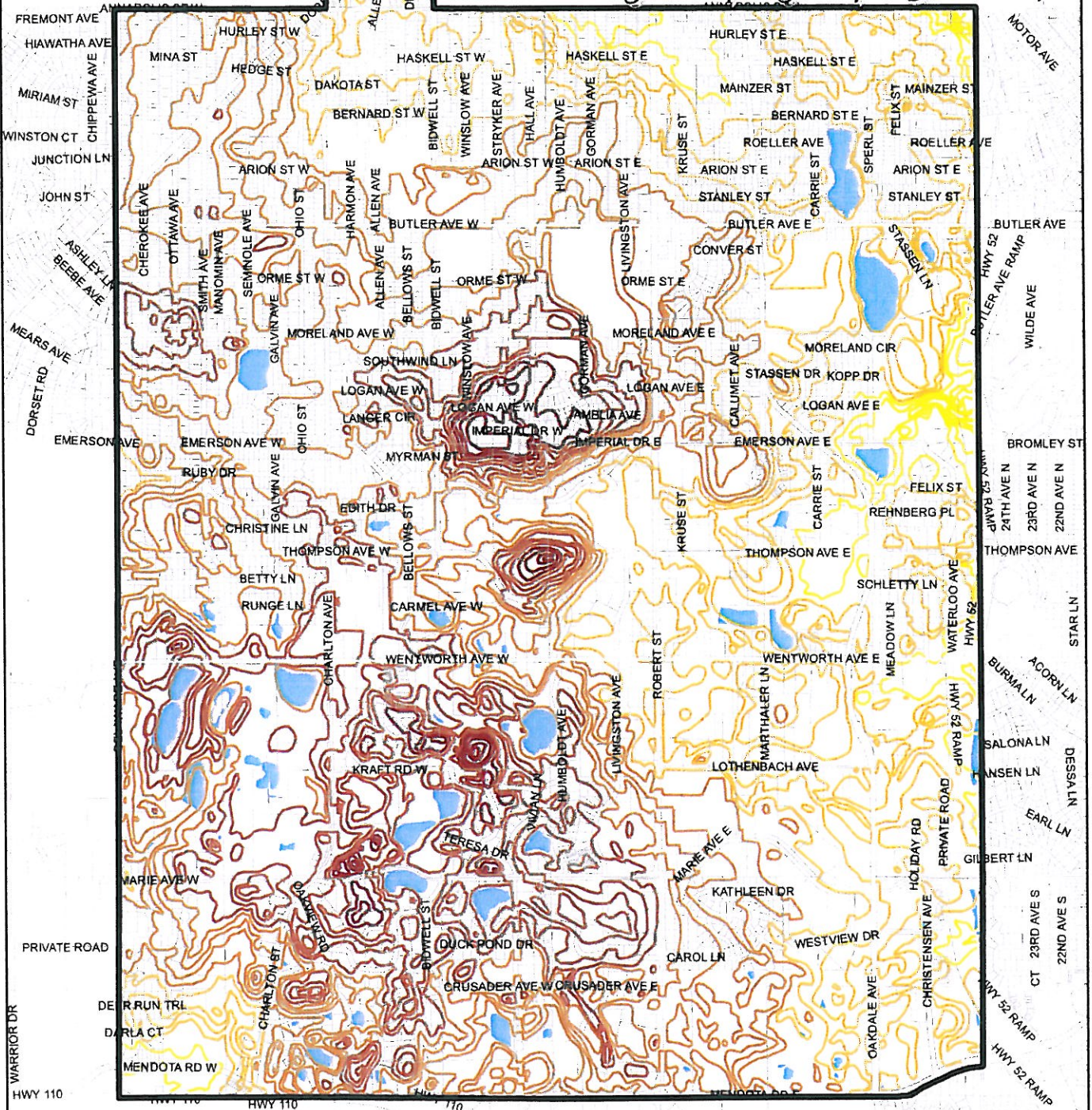
<b>Thompson Lake</b>	<b>10 acres</b>
<b>Lilly Lake</b>	<b>7 acres</b>
<b>Mud Lake</b>	<b>5 acres</b>
<b>Marthaler Pond</b>	<b>4 acres</b>

Other identified water bodies include: Duck Pond, Emerson Pond, Garlough Pond, Vivian Pond, Wentworth Ponds, St. Croix Pond, and Dodge Center Ponds.



# 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update

# West St. Paul Existing Topography Map



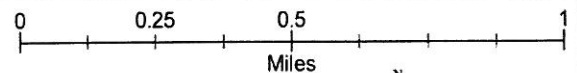
## LEGEND



WATER

## 10 FOOT CONTOURS

- 880 - 940
- 950 - 980
- 990 - 1020
- 1030 - 1060
- 1070 - 1110

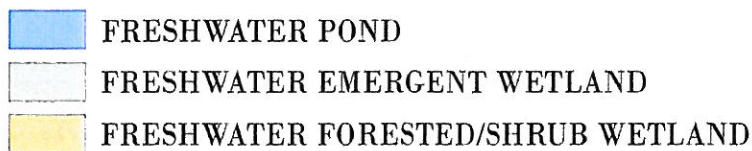


**LOUCKS  
ASSOCIATES**

Source: MetroGIS Datafinder



# West St. Paul National Wetland Inventory



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2030 Comprehensive  
Plan Update

# West St. Paul Natural Features Map

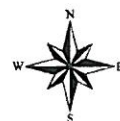


## LEGEND

-  11 - 25 % IMPERVIOUS
-  26 - 50% IMPERVIOUS
-  51 - 75% IMPERVIOUS
-  76 - 100% IMPERVIOUS
-  WATER
-  MARSH

-  FOREST
-  SHORT GRASS WITH TREES
-  SHORT GRASS
-  LONG GRASS
-  SHRUBLAND
-  CROPLAND

0 0.25 0.5 1  
Miles



Source: Minnesota Land  
Cover Classification System

**LOUCKS  
ASSOCIATES**



# 4

## Community Issues

The planning process in the City's 1998 Comprehensive Plan Update solicited the opinions of local residents through a series of meetings held with the neighborhood associations and the Comprehensive Planning Task Force. The 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update built on this input holding public input meetings and workshops at the Planning Commission level. A community input survey was also performed with issues identified (see appendix).

### Robert Street Redevelopment

In 1998, the public participation process identified the Robert Street corridor as the highest commercial land use priority for the City. Both the form and function of the street were extensively discussed. A consensus formed as to retaining the "Main Street" character of the street while recognizing and preserving the street's function as the transportation backbone of the community. To this end, the City established a Robert Street Task force to address the multiplicity of problems and opportunities that exist on South Robert Street. An architectural design team was hired to provide an overall vision, analyze design alternatives, and propose options for future redevelopment opportunities. The City later initiated and adopted the "Redevelopment Design Framework: a Strategy for South Robert Streets Renaissance" in 2000.

Since 2000, the City had adopted significant zoning ordinance changes primarily to the business zones. A formal site planning process including stricter design standards was implemented. Reduced setbacks were implemented to encourage redevelopment and implementation of design standards. A new "Gateway North District" was implemented in the zoning ordinance in 2007 to address mixed use development along the northern portion of the Robert Street corridor. Many of the changes implemented can be seen in the recent developments along Robert Street today. As the Robert Street corridor continues to undergo change, it presents both challenges and opportunities for the City. The City should continue to implement the policies and objectives in the Robert Street Renaissance Plan. Recently, a joint committee was formed to re-evaluate the implementation of the plan.





## Scattered Site Redevelopment

The City system of streets and neighborhoods evolved over the past 90 years. Early in the City's history the neighborhoods were built to accommodate the then current needs of local residents. In many cases structures were built at the sidewalk, directly adjacent to the public right-of-way. The home or business may not have needed a garage or place to store a vehicle. Thus the 40 and 50 foot wide lots that were commonly used across the river in St. Paul were found to be appropriate in size and scale. Neighborhood grocery stores, cafes, taverns, and convenience goods shops were scattered through the northern portion of the City. While these lots perfectly met the needs of their day, present day owners find themselves applying for variances and conditional use permits to accomplish what most people expect as minimum property rights associated with their homesites: two-car garages, decks, room additions, all which come into conflict with these 90 year old narrow lots.

The City should continue to encourage the improvement and redevelopment of vacant or blighted properties through the Quality Housing Plan established in 2000 and the Housing Replacement Program, and should utilize the resources of the Dakota County Community Development Agency (CDA) in the City's effort to maintain a high quality housing stock. In response to the recent foreclosure crisis, the Dakota County CDA has initiated a program to help at risk home owners. The program is in its infancy stages of development, but could be a key tool in years to come. The City Code Enforcement PACE and CASE programs, exterior housing mini-grants and property recognition programs are also designed to maintain and promote quality housing in the City.

## Life Cycle Housing

In the last Comprehensive Plan, the City identified the lack of senior housing as a growing concern. Since that time, less of an emphasis has been placed on building apartments and greater focus has been placed on townhomes, condominiums, and age-restrictive living facilities and mixed use types. This effort to provide the community with greater living choices has promoted life-cycle housing goals as well as revitalized blighted and underutilized properties. As the general population continues to grow and age, there will be more demand for age restrictive housing and other alternative residential uses. The City has recently considered zoning amendments to address senior living and community centers.



## Auto-Related Uses

In 2005, the City initiated a study regarding auto-related uses. It was perceived that the City had received more than its fair share of auto-related uses over the years, and although they serve a purpose, didn't want them to be the City's primary identity. The City was also concerned about the operations and aesthetics of the existing auto-related uses. At the time, the City adopted stricter standards in the zoning ordinance to address auto-related use types, but did not wish to change the areas where they were permitted. In 2008 the City re-examined the issue through a joint committee which resulted in City Council approval of an ordinance that rezoned certain auto-uses from the commercial districts to the industrial districts.



## Neighborhood Organization

Eleven neighborhood associations were established in 1994. The stated purpose of the West Saint Neighborhood Associations is "to draw together a great diversity of people to work together to enhance the livability of their neighborhood. Neighborhood Associations are concerned with issues that affect the quality of life in the community."

In addition to their other civic functions, the eleven neighborhood associations had a large role in the public input process in the development of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. A number of meetings were held with each neighborhood. The goals and policies developed in 1998 have been used as a base line for subsequent studies, projects, and plan updates.

As funding became scarce, the eleven associations eventually combined into one association. Consequently, its presence and strength has diminished, but it still plays an active role in supporting community initiatives.

